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MEMORANDUM

Special Assessments on the Middle East Situation

ARAB SOLIDARITY IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
23 June 1967

Arab Solidarity in the Next Few Months

1. The Arabs demonstrated impressive solidarity during the recent conflict. Unlike 1956, this time all Israel's neighbors except Lebanon took part in the battle. The conservative monarchies put aside their long-standing disputes with the radical pan-Arab nationalists to join in the popular cause against Israel. Now, following their defeat, the Arab leaders are trying to chart their course for the future.

2. The war brought changes to the Arab world. One of the most notable has been the weakening of Nasir's prestige among the Arab leaders. Not only did the inept performance of Egyptian armed forces earn him little credit among his fellow Arabs, but his credibility was called into question by his initial concealment of the loss of his air force. Now Nasir has to share the limelight with such heretofore secondary figures as Boumediene of Algeria, and to a degree with even King Husayn of Jordan. Nonetheless, the willingness of the Soviets to continue to support Nasir and his forces and the lack of an alternative candidate with the necessary stature and appeal to the masses make it unlikely that a new personality will soon win recognition as a paramount leader. Hence the Arab world must face the critical period of peace making without any clearly acknowledged leader.

3. Another important change has been the broad upsurge of popular hostility toward the US and the UK as a result of the war. Most conservative and moderate Arab leaders doubt Nasir's canard about US-UK military participation in the conflict, but all resent US sympathy and support for Israel and all feel under pressure to retaliate. This anti-American sentiment has not only undermined US influence among the conservatives, but has contributed

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to a general rise in radicalism throughout the area. This has strengthened internal opposition, particularly to the conservative regimes in Libya and Saudi Arabia which were not in the forefront of the conflict with Israel.

4. However, the Arabs have shown a clear lack of unity in their policy toward the US and the UK. The more radical Arab regimes have broken relations with the US and are urging far-reaching political and economic retaliation. This the moderates are unwilling to accept. Indeed, the Arab foreign ministers' meeting in Kuwait on 18 June appears to have broken up in disagreement over sanctions to be applied against the US. While in the heat of the crisis the oil producing states bowed to pressures for an oil boycott of English and American markets, this united front is already cracking. Saudi Arabia will probably soon drop its boycott. There is a good chance that most of the other oil producing countries will follow suit not long after. Similarly, the odds are good that Morocco will ignore demands to close American facilities, though Libya may feel impelled to carry through its decision to remove American and British bases there.

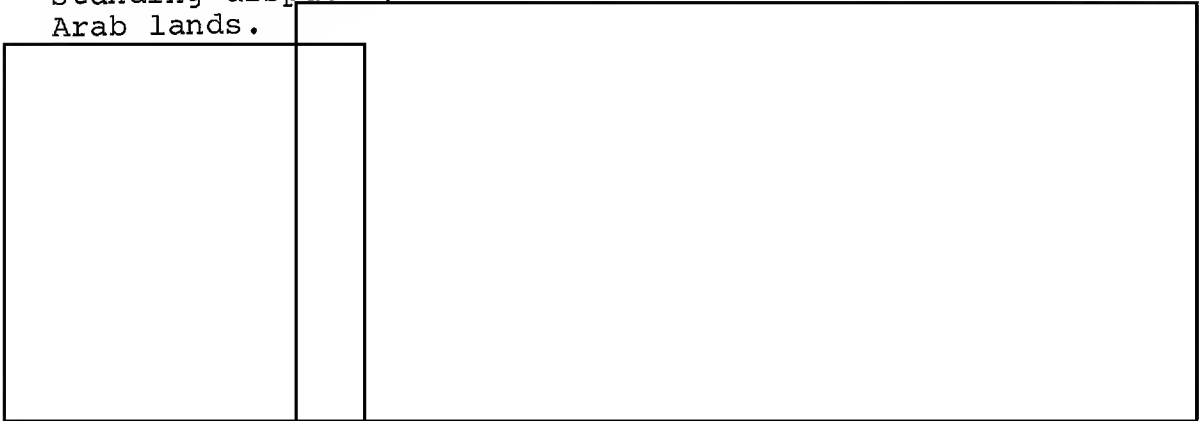
5. A key test of Arab solidarity will be its success in concerting action against Israel. All Arabs want to see Israel forced to disgorge its recent conquests. Continuing Israeli occupation of these lands and Israel's insistence on broad political gains will provide further impetus to Arab cooperation. Yet there is some diversity in approach even to these matters. The losses of war have brought home to Husayn the need for accommodation with Israel, though he is unwilling to risk breeching the common Arab front by alone engaging in even indirect exploratory negotiations with the Israelis. Husayn, however, is seeking to convene an Arab summit meeting in an effort to strengthen the hands of the moderates. For his part Nasir has not been enthusiastic about holding such a meeting, probably because he fears challenges to his leadership and possibly because he has not evolved a suitable policy to turn military defeat to political advantage. Particularly in view of Syrian and Algerian opposition, it is unlikely that this meeting will be held in the near future. Such a failure would demonstrate that the prospects for meaningful Arab solidarity have weakened.

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6. Dim as Arab chances for acting in concert appear to be, we do not expect any imminent return to the strident propaganda wars which have at times past characterized intra-Arab relations. Suspicion between the radicals and conservatives may grow; Syria and Jordan are already again annoyed at each other. The increasing violence in South Arabia will also probably contribute strains to Arab cooperation. Yet as defeat has shaken virtually all Arab regimes, we believe no state wishes to agitate long-standing disputes, at least as long as Israel holds Arab lands.



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